

Alma – and the Rest

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There is some romance to the study of the Turkic loan elements in Hungarian language, especially of those loaned before the so called „land-conquest”, i.e. the settling of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin, but that is not the (only) reason why I chose this topic as the subject of the study in this inaugural volume.

Éva was among the first of my university teachers I met and the very first from the Department of Altaic Studies whom I got to know. It was a Friday in the early fall of 1984 and the weather was what counted as particularly summery at the time. Éva, representing her department at the pre-enrollment meeting for the first year students, shared with us that in Szeged we could study even something like „Altaic Studies”. Because I had chosen to study Hungarian primarily for the sake of studying language history, and I had read quite on the history of Hungarian, I was aware of the importance of the early Turkic loanwords for a language historian. Thus, I contacted the department immediately after the meeting, hoping that I could learn about early Turkic loanwords there.

I found Éva in the large common room that functioned also as a library, standing at the top of a tall metal ladder, looking for something among the academic journals on the top shelves. I told her that I had planned to enroll as a Hungarian-German major on Monday, but I would give up German without hesitation if I could add Altaic Studies instead because I was so very interested in it. I still remember her surprise, as she gave me a look I took to mean she thought I was a little bit – or not a little bit – „strange”, to say the least. But she explained me patiently how the recruitment was going – by no means at the pace I would have liked – but advised me I should come to the first meeting where the courses are scheduled. That is what I did, and as it turned out Éva also ended up teaching me. Her class, Turkic Loanwords in Hungarian, was my favorite of all my Altaic classes. In the next semester, we learned the rules for compiling etymologies from her. Although perhaps it is not a particularly desirable subject for others, it was for me, and I think I owe that to her. I loved her lessons. It quickly became evident she is an excellent teacher. I later got to know her as one of the most invaluable people I know. I have known since then that she is the best friend one could imagine – and it is a blessing that so many of us have been able to experience this about her.

Vámbéry as a Linguist

Ármin Vámbéry¹ came to be thought of in 20th century Hungary as a “dilettante linguist” who, out of national pride, clung with tooth and nail to the doctrine that the Hungarian language belongs to the family of Turkic languages. It is taught as part of the school curriculum that he was in the wrong in a contentious linguistic debate dubbed the „Ugric-Turkic War”, which was fought in the newspapers: Vámbéry stuck to the old, false doctrines to the bitter end, as opposed to Pál Hunfalvy and József Budenz, who were excellent linguists and represented the enlightened scientific view that the Hungarian language is actually of Finno-Ugric origin. The “Turkic-party” Vámbéry was unable to accept this, and his disciples viciously attacked the poor Finno-Ugricists (Pusztay 1977).

This story, however, is a myth. It was fabricated by representatives of the winning scientific paradigm. It omits that Hunfalvy’s work also contains mistakes: for a long time he advocates a Hun-Scythian kinship, and in 1856 he is still arguing that the Dakota language is closely related to the Indo-European, Semitic, and Altaic “language species” (Hunfalvy 1856). These stories also tend to leave out that not only the publicists on Vámbéry’s side were brutal – those of the “Finnish party” were as well. Furthermore, Vámbéry cannot be accused at all of assuming close linguistic ties with Turkic languages solely for the sake of national prestige, as he himself writes that some people value Asian kinship more than Finno-Ugric out of “petty and childish national vanity” (Vámbéry 1882, 13–4). Undoubtedly, Vámbéry puts forward a large number of erroneous ideas, and only a small proportion of his etymologies – about one third – could later be proved accurate. Let us not forget, however, that most of his contemporaries did not have much better success: the precision of positivism that later became the cornerstone of historical linguistics was not a requirement in the first phase of Vámbéry’s career. There were no large collections of sources and no dictionaries that would have allowed his work to meet the criteria we set for linguistic history today. That is why it is important to say that Vámbéry also has good etymologies, and Hunfalvy and Budenz also propose many that could not be verified later. So, the picture is no longer black and white in this respect, either.

The picture becomes even more detailed if we base our evaluation of Vámbéry’s linguistic work on more than his etymologies and comparative linguistic views. These give a distorted picture because, although Vámbéry does not follow the strict rules of the then-developing positivist language history methods, he takes into account the social and historical embeddedness of the language much more than his

1 Ármin Vámbéry (Hermann Wamberger, 1832–1913) was a Hungarian Orientalist of Jewish origin. He was a language genius who, in addition to several European languages, learned Hebrew and several Central Asian languages as well. He spent a long time in Istanbul and was at one time the secretary of the influential Mehmed Fuad Pasha. He spoke Turkish so well he was able to travel Central Asia disguised as a dervish. His journeys into the East aimed to discover the ancestral homeland of the Hungarians.

contemporaries do – not coincidentally, as he collected data in his studies of Central Asian Turkic languages and cultures primarily as an ethnographer. He is thus much more inclined towards the approach from which anthropological linguistics later evolved: if he had not succeeded at perfecting „participant observation” during his studies in Central Asian, he would have paid for it with his life. This explains why he sees the relationship between language and ethnicity much more clearly than his contemporaries – it should be emphasized, since it is little-known. Hunfalvy, for example, never renounces his belief that the origins and history of ethnic groups and languages are the same. In 1883 he writes, “the ethnic origin of a nation must be considered to be the same as that of the language in question” (Hunfalvy 1883, 35). By that year Vámbéry has long since moved past this unsustainable view, as he sees precisely that the formation of a nation or ethnicity is a process that includes ethnic mixing regardless of the continuity of the language. He criticizes Hunfalvy for the approach quoted above, and rightly so.

Fairness and historical fidelity therefore require that we do away with this myth painting Vámbéry only in a bad light. It is natural that every community creates myths that portray itself in a good light and its opponents in the opposite, as was the case with those who interpreted the scientific debate between Vámbéry versus Hunfalvy and Budenz as a conflict between faiths. However, we need to know that these myths are biased, and accordingly the image of Vámbéry that exists in the public imagination is distorted and one-sided.² In the last decade, a significant change in the image of Vámbéry has been brought about by the efforts of Vámbéry’s hometown, Dunaszerdahely. There, the Vámbéry Civic Association (*Vámbéry Polgári Társulás*) has worked to raise the profile of Vámbéry’s work, and, importantly, Vámbéry’s works are being republished. The events and publications of the Vámbéry Memorial Year, announced on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Vámbéry’s death – both in Hungary and abroad – can also make a significant contribution to giving Ármin Vámbéry a well-deserved place in the history of Hungarian science.³

It is also time to recognize Ármin Vámbéry not only for his ethnographic descriptions, publications, and pioneering philological works. It is worthwhile to re-evaluate the oeuvre Vámbéry has created as a linguist. In this article, I will address one facet of it: that according to Vámbéry, the large number of Turkic loanwords came to Hungarian when a formerly Turkic ethnic group was assimilated into the Hungarian tribes. This question is interesting because at several times since the possibility has

2 This myth is particularly strong in the public’s perception, as the work of Ármin Vámbéry was appreciated by Orientalists from a much earlier date. A Vámbéry’s biography free of this myth was written by György Hazai decades before Vámbéry became “fashionable” (Hazai 1976). Its new edition, with a bibliography of Vámbéry’s works: Hazai 2009.

3 In December 2013 conferences were organized in Budapest, Ankara, and Tehran in addition to Dunaszerdahely to pay tribute to the work of Vámbéry. The MTA Library’s pages introducing Vámbéry were also created at this time, and the August 2013 issue of *Hungarian Science* was also dedicated to Vámbéry.

been raised that the Turkic words that had been loaned into Hungarian were memories preserved from the language of the formerly Turkic ethnic group.

Vámbéry's Theory of Language Shift

Contrary to popular belief, Vámbéry never said that the Hungarian language was not also Finno-Ugric: he considered Hungarian to be Finno-Ugric *and* Turkic all along. In his day there was no contradiction in this, as the Altaic and Uralic languages were grouped together even much later. His opinion changed several times as to whether Hungarian is more closely related to Turkic or Finno-Ugric languages. In his work published in 1869, he takes the position that the root of Hungarian was Finno-Ugric and the Turkic influences came later (Vámbéry 1869). When József Budenz, contrary to his own earlier view, wrote a strict critique of Vámbéry's book (Budenz 1871). Vámbéry partially reformulated his previous position in response to the criticism. His book *The Origin of the Hungarians (A magyarok eredete)* was published in 1882. In it he categorizes the Hungarian language as primarily Turkic and secondarily Finno-Ugric (Vámbéry 1882). Later, however, he returned to his original view: in his last book, published in 1895 after his death, *At the Cradle of the Hungarians (A magyarok bölcsőjénél)*, he put forward that the Hungarian language's core and grammar were predominantly Finno-Ugric but its vocabulary was largely Turkic (Vámbéry 1895, 1914). Vámbéry explained this by saying that Hungarians came from a mixture of ethnicities and the ruling ethnic group among this new, emerging population was Turkic. He made it clear in his texts that he was discussing only linguistic and not ethnic kinship, since the Hungarians, like all the peoples of Europe, came from a mixture of several ethnicities. In summary:

“... At the very beginning of the emergence of the Hungarian people and language, the Ugric rather than the Turkic element comes to the fore; but this can no longer be said about the later development of the ethnicity that spoke Hungarian when the Turkic element dominates, and the words for family life, religion, state organization, military matters, ethical and moral concepts are mostly of Turkic origin. In short, the Hungarian is descended from the Ugor, and, with the passage of time, became Turkified and was a Turkic ethnicity when it stepped onto the world stage.” (Vámbéry 2008, 38–39).

Instead of speaking of the “development” of people, languages, or ethnicities, we now say that these are changing and transforming; the term “Turkified” is also inaccurate, as the Hungarian language is still not one of the Turkic languages. But it may be true that the proportion of the Turkic ethnic component may have been notable among the Hungarians who first came into the Carpathian Basin, or that, while the Hungarians' language was not Turkified, their culture was. It is also true that there was no doubt about this in the eyes of the contemporary 9th–10th century world. Nor can we deny that the Hungarian language had to have a very intense Turkic influence

before the 10th century since we still use almost four hundred words of Turkic origin even after more than a thousand years later and over many cultural changes since the 10th century.

Thus, Vámbéry thought of the Turkic ethnic component as the stronger, the organizing force among the Hungarian tribes, and he saw the language shift in this context. And rightly so, since if we assume that before the entrance into the Carpathian Basin Turkic-speaking ethnic groups joined the Finno-Ugric-speaking Hungarian ethnicities, then they obviously shifted language. However, Vámbéry could not explain why, in his opinion, the Turkic group, who, in his view, were culturally and later even numerically superior, adopted the Ugric language. In 1895, in his work *The Origin and Spread of the Hungarian (A magyarság keletkezése és gyarapodása)* he formulated a theory that many have tried to rethink (emphasis in the original):

“Judging by what is most obvious in the language, it seems that the skeleton of this linguistic body was Ugric, but its flesh and blood were of Turkic origin; however, whether the Turkic peoples known as the Huns and Avars were affected by the Ugric peoples that became subject to them only with the passage of time, or whether the profound marks of the Ugric peoples’ tribal affiliation became clear at the outset because of their large numbers, I think, can hardly ever be definitively decided. [...] We should only conditionally accept that *the original Ugric majority was transformed ethnically by the influence of the increasing number of Turkic elements but survived linguistically.*” (Vámbéry 1895, 94).

Other Theories of Language Shift

In 1912, Zoltán Gombocz opens a new era in the research of Turkic loanwords in the Hungarian language. Gombocz clearly considers the Turkic elements of the Hungarian language to be loanwords and not a “legacy” remaining after a shift in languages (Gombocz 1912). After he lends his authority to this position, the language shift theory all but disappeared. There are still some afterwards who, like Vámbéry, attribute the pre-conquest Turkic words in Hungarian to a former Turkic-speaking ruling caste who were later linguistically assimilated.

In his short book entitled *Hungarian Prehistory*, published in 1939, István Zichy explains his theory in a much more detailed way than Vámbéry. In his view, the Ugric tribes living, fishing and hunting in the forests of the Kama and Pechora regions were dominated by the Onogurs, who later controlled the territory of Bashkortostan and also engaged in the fur trade, so that the Ugric tribes paid their taxes in furs. The Ugrics, who lived in an unsophisticated culture, “did not wish for more,” and so the fur trading groups of the more advanced Onogurs learned the language of their subjects, and later the other Onogurs learned this same language from them. The Onogurs preserved from their original Turkic language those words, for which the

Ugric language, reflecting its less developed culture, had no equivalent, – according to Zichy, the Turkic loanwords in Hungarian derive from here. The Onogurs, of course, remained bilingual, but the Ugric (originally of Uralic origin) language had spread among them before the 5th century, as the Volga Hungarians, who were separated from the main body of Hungarians during the migrations and later, in the 13th century found by frater Julianus, already spoke “Ugric Hungarian” (i.e. a Finno-Ugric language). At the same time, the Turkic language, though spoken by smaller and smaller groups, remained until the second half of the 11th century, according to Zichy, explaining why there are so many Hungarian tribal and personal names of Turkic origin. Zichy saw the reason for the eventual disappearance of the Turkic language of Onogur origin in the fact that the connection with the Turkic languages close to „Onogur-Hungarian”, the languages of the Volga and the Danube Bulgarians, was lost. In the case of the Danube Bulgarians, this was because they linguistically became Slavic (Zichy 1939).

Thus, Zichy speaks much less about ethnic integration than Vámbéry. Zichy considers the Hungarians essentially Onogur-Turks who shifted language. It is particularly interesting that Zichy, who is otherwise very sensitive to the social and cultural aspects of language shift, argues that the Turkic-speaking Onogurs simply learned the language of their subjects for the sake of the fur trade. Nor does he justify why, even if that were the case, the other Onogurs would have learned the language of the “uneducated” Ugric people from the fur traders. He also fails to explain why the subordinate language, which was previously used only by a forest-dwelling Ugric people, would have become the dominant language of the ethnically and culturally Turkic Hungarians, whom he considered to have become bilingual by the time of the migration. His theory is thus more elaborate but more unrealistic than Vámbéry’s, as it contradicts everything that sociolinguistic experience has revealed about the reasons for language shift based on social-cultural-political dominance.

Much later, Tibor Halasi-Kun proposes a modified version of the language shift theory in 1990. In his view, the Hungarians’ language was originally Turkic, and their language shift was caused by the fact that, to make up for the loss of human life in battle, the nomads accepted the children of concubines as full members of their community. These children, however, were raised by their non-Turkic-speaking mothers. He writes, “Hungarians as steppe nomads lived in a warrior society with patriarchal traditions and matriarchal linguistic influences in a polygamous social framework,” and “as men were often distant, women became carriers of existing traditions, while transplanting their own language into the society they had been absorbed into” (Halasi-Kun 1990).

There are at least as many problems with Halasi-Kun’s theory as with Zichy’s. We are expected to believe that the children of Turkic-speaking mothers did not come into contact with their siblings from Ugric-Hungarian mothers, that the servants and concubines all came from the same ethnic group and were present in large numbers, and even that nor them neither their children did not learn the Turkic language of their

half-siblings, father, family, clan, tribe. All three claims are unjustifiable and decidedly unlikely.

Common to Vámbéry's, Zichy's and Halasi-Kun's theories of language shift is the theory that the pre-conquest Turkic borrowings in the Hungarian language were derived from the language of Turkic peoples believed to comprise a leader caste of the Hungarian tribal alliance. According to this theory, this ruling class assimilated but preserved much from its original language. In other words, this theory holds that these particular Turkic loanwords in Hungarian are actually *preserved* words, at least from the point of view of the assimilated Turkic speaking ethnic groups. The view expressed by Sándor Tóth, which attributes the Turkic loanwords in Hungarian to the language of the Kabars, is similar, except that according to his theory the mass of loanwords that are "preserved heritage" do not originate from assimilated leading tribes but from assimilated joining tribes (Tóth 1996).

Zichy's and Halasi-Kun's theories are clearly flawed. Every aspect of them contradicts established facts about linguistics, and the historical basis they rely on is also highly dubious. Vámbéry is much more restrained. He does not concoct a fairytale history, as he only writes that a Ugric population met a Turkic population and came under their cultural but not linguistic influence. This theory is still the prevailing one today. Could it also be true that Turkic loanwords do not actually come from borrowing but are the remnants of the original language of a formerly Turkic-speaking but assimilated Turkic population? Exactly the same question can be raised regarding Tóth's hypothesis: can the pre-Carpathian Basin Turkic vocabulary in Hungarian be the "heritage" of the language of the Kabars? We know, of course, that the Turkic – and Iranian – ethnic groups that were absorbed into the Hungarian tribes certainly shifted language, regardless of what we conclude about the words of Iranian and Turkic origin coming to Hungarian as a result of borrowing or a substrate effect.

Historical Sociolinguistics: Borrowing and Substrates

In the following, using historical sociolinguistic methods, I examine the possibility whether the early Turkic vocabulary in Hungarian can be explained as substrate phenomenon. The theoretical foundation of historical sociolinguistics is Lyell's principle, which, adapted to linguistics, holds that the general properties of language and the process by which linguistic changes occur are the same throughout human history (Labov 1994, 21–23). When performing historical reconstruction, it is also useful to recall Labov's observation that historical linguistics is the art of how to get the best possible result from distorted and incomplete data (Labov 1994, 11). In applying Lyell's principle to the linguistic analysis of historical Turkic – Hungarian contact, it is worthwhile to first recall a general description of linguistic borrowings, in this case Thomason and Kaufman's. Their typology is based on a large database of recent and present language contact situations. Studies of contemporary language contacts prove that the linguistic imprint of the borrowing and the substrate are very

different. In borrowing native speakers of one language transfer items from another language to their own (native) language but their dominant language remains their native language. Thomason and Kaufman set up a scale based on the intensity of linguistic contact that includes the characteristic phases of borrowing. This is an implicational scale meaning that if we find that a contact shows the characteristics of one of the levels, it is implied to have already gone through the earlier phases of loaning, i.e. we will also find the characteristics of the previous levels. According to the borrowing scale, the first phase is always the borrowing of words, as even minor structural (grammatical) borrowing is usually preceded by large-scale word borrowing (Thomason and Kauffman 1988).

A substrate effect can be observed after language shift. It is the result of adult language learning: after the end of the critical period of language learning, a second or foreign language usually is no longer acquired perfectly. Thus, when many adults of a community acquire a second language, they inadvertently develop a variety in which the perspectives and phonetic features of their mother tongue are reflected. Thus, the linguistic elements of which speakers are the least aware of (that are the least reflected) appear in the substrate. (This is the same when we learn a foreign language.) That is why words are not typically included in substrate phenomena. If future generations learn the contact variety of the language which is modified by the mother tongue of their parents, traces of the original mother tongue of the community will be preserved, at least for a while. There is less chance of this if the new dominant language is constantly present and the new generations learn its native („original”) varieties as well, and not just the contact variety created by their parents.

For a better understanding of the difference between borrowing and substrate, I suggest to introduce the concept that highlights the depth of cognitive embeddedness. My aim is that interpreting the observations of contact linguistics from a cognitive point of view, we can say that the stronger the cognitive embeddedness of a linguistic element, the more likely it is that the language shifting group will transfer it to the new language. As I see, the degree of the cognitive embeddedness of a linguistic element depends, for example, on the frequency of its use, its structural embeddedness, and the degree of its markedness in both relative (between contact languages) and absolute (universal psycholinguistic) terms. In summary, we can say that the strength of a linguistic element depends on how strong the associative neural network connections of that element are. It follows that substrate phenomena occur most commonly in phonology and sentence structure and most rarely in vocabulary.

In this theoretical frame, borrowing and substrate effects are primarily distinguished by their degree of linguistic embeddedness and, introducing another cognitive aspect, the extent to which an element is available to linguistic awareness. The availability to language awareness depends on how easily a linguistic element can be segmented by speakers: words are easily differentiated, while the internal rules of the phoneme system, the category system of the language (the units and subunits it divides the world into and how it does so) and a language's embedded "worldview" (verb modes, verb tenses, use of plural or singular, what counts as a "unit," etc.) are

less available for language awareness. The looser the associative network into which the new element is to be inserted and the easier it is to segment a linguistic element for language awareness, the greater the chances of borrowing. In the case of the substrate, the opposite is true: the more difficult it is for linguistic awareness to access an element, the greater the chance that it will be preserved in the new language after a language shift.

Borrowing can be both from above and from below, meaning that speakers may notice that they have used an element from another language, but they can also remain unconscious of it.⁴ The elements that remain as substrate effects, on the other hand, are hidden, and speakers are mostly unaware that such a linguistic element is an imprint of their group's former mother tongue.

Thus, the most common elements in borrowing are those that speakers are most readily aware of – in the first phases of borrowing, only such elements are copied by speakers. It is recognizability that makes borrowed elements suitable for a symbolic, identity-performing function: for example, if the culture behind the second language is highly prestigious, then the use of borrowed words expresses the acceptance of this and the desire to belong, since the borrowed words symbolize the language of their origin and the culture behind it. There are examples, however, for hidden borrowing as well, i.e. when meaning is borrowed – but also words can be borrowed from below, which is to say unconsciously. In cases of intensive bilingualism it is common for speakers to borrow words from the second language, without any cultural reason, simply for psycholinguistic reasons: they recall certain words in the second language faster because, for instance, they use a given expression more frequently in that language or they use the second language in a given context (such as when reading or writing a professional text). A recognized trait of borrowing that is not necessarily related to a strong identity is the earliest identified type of borrowing: cultural borrowing. This occurs when a group encounters a previously unknown concept, object, or phenomenon, or they encounter a new version of something that is already familiar to them. If they primarily learn about the phenomenon or behavior from the other group, they also take on the other group's words associated with that cultural innovation.

Thus, in addition to the cognitive relations of language, socio-cultural-political factors, i.e. the symbolic aspects of language use, also play a very important role in borrowing. In contrast, the development of the substrate effect is driven by the cognitive embeddedness of language. In simplified terms, borrowed words express expectations, values, or loyalty, since others notice that we have used a “foreign word.” However, this is not the case with the substrate phenomenon, since we do not even realize it. Of course, after the development of the new and modified contact variety of the language that is influenced by substrate effects, the variety itself takes on symbolic values, and like all language varieties may serve to symbolize the identity

4 “Change from above” and “change from below” do not refer to relative social status but to levels of cognitive awareness.

of the community that uses it. But social and cultural values play no role in why particular elements came into the new language.

Borrowing or Language Shift?

Keeping in mind the fundamental differences between borrowing and the substrate effect makes it easier to answer the question of whether the Turkic influence in Hungarian can be a remnant of the language of Turkic ethnic groups that played a role in the formation of the Hungarians. The pre-Carpathian Basin Hungarian alliance certainly had a Turkic ethnic component. Those groups did indeed shift language, but it is now impossible to find traces of their language in Hungarian. In the past, these clues were sought in vocabulary, but we should have been looking at grammar, phonetics, and *qualques* in Hungarian dialects spoken by formerly Turkic-speaking people who had already gone through language shift and became Hungarian - that is, shortly after their assimilation. The many hundreds of words in the vocabulary may not be their "heritage." Based on data from contact linguistics, it seems more likely that these words came into Hungarian before the Turkic-speaking people who joined the Hungarians underwent their language shift, when the Hungarian tribes encountered and adopted Turkic nomadic culture. Thus, the linguistic elements of Turkic origin were already part of that Hungarian language, which was adopted by Turkic people who later assimilated into the Hungarian alliance.

The theory that these elements were derived from the Kabar language can be refuted by the same argument from contact linguistics. It is quite unlikely that the early Turkic elements would have entered Hungarian borrowed from the language of the Kabars. For one thing, it is difficult to imagine that the Hungarians would have learned these words, which almost all relate to the nomadic lifestyle, only towards the end of their time on the Steppes. For another, the Kabars were a newly-joined group in the Hungarian alliance, and as such their lower position in the tribal hierarchy meant they did not have the necessary prestige for their language to have had such a strong effect on the language of the then very strong Hungarian tribal alliance.

We can thus say that linguistic arguments show all the above mentioned language shift theories in Hungarian as unlikely. In today's Hungarian language, almost four hundred pre-Carpathian Basin Turkic loanwords can be detected (Róna-Tas and Berta 2011), and there must have been even more before the 10th century. We know that borrowing is most evident in vocabulary, but hardly characteristic of the substrate effect after language shift. To the cases examined by Thomason and Kaufman, we can add another that is geographically and historically close to the Hungarian land-conquest: after the linguistic assimilation of the Danube Bulgarians settling among the Slavs, almost no words from the former Turkic language of the ruling class survived.

It is worth mentioning, however, that there are some known examples that run counter to the general rule: in some cases, not only grammatical elements but also a

large number of words from the former language were passed on from a former language when language shift took place. The best known is the example of the Norman language, whose language preserved hundreds of words even after the Normans underwent a language shift. Such cases, in which the linguistically assimilated group played a superior sociocultural role rather than a subordinate one, are also called *superstratic*. This difference is very important linguistically: it seems that political and cultural superiority is what allows a significant number of words from the former mother tongue to be preserved. It is worth noting that the Turkic-Hungarian language shift assumed by Vámbéry is closer to the Norman–Anglo-Saxon relationship and not to the Bulgarian-Slavic relationship. The Danube Bulgarian settlers were politically but not culturally dominant over the local Slavic culture, who practiced agriculture, but the Turkic leadership presupposed by Vámbéry would have dominated the also nomadic Ugric-speaking population.

Of course, the linguistic substrate and the borrowing are not mutually exclusive: often, before a language shift, the original mother tongue of the group that later shifts language serves as a source language for speakers of the other language. We can approach determining the possible ratio between the two language processes if we more closely examine the structural effect of Turkic on the Hungarian language. It may be determined that the discovered effect is more characteristic of borrowing or a linguistic substrate, i.e. that the Turkic traces prove to be more the kind of language elements that can be borrowed or more of what is retained (even if we often cannot determine which category an element can be classified into). The examination of structural effects is important for this reason, but it is also important in itself, because a comprehensive analysis of structural effects has so far been missing from the study of Turkic elements in Hungarian.

It is customary to make another linguistic historical argument against the possibility of a Turkic-Hungarian language shift. According to Lajos Ligeti and András Róna-Tas, the Turkic loanwords in Hungarian come from several Turkic languages and probably from several periods of Turkic language history (Ligeti 1986; Róna-Tas and Berta 2011). According to the generally accepted view, a significant portion of the loanwords contain an *r*-Turkic criterion, while some contain a *z*-Turkic criterion (a significant part of them contain neither, but due to their similar meanings they are customarily classified with the *r*-Turkic words). There are also considered to be two historical layers of *r*-Turkic loanwords. This means that the pre-Carpathian Basin Turkic borrowings in the Hungarian language come from at least three different source languages.

This is, of course, possible. However, it is better to be careful with historical data, because linguistic heterogeneity can easily deceive linguists doing historical reconstruction. It is well known from the study of ongoing language changes that many linguistic variables have at least two variants, an older and a newer one, and that these can exist side by side in the same language for a long time, possibly for centuries, or even in the same dialect or in the same idiolect of a given speaker. This, in turn, reminds us that words derived from different *r*-Turkic periods may have been

borrowed into Hungarian from the same Turkic language. In fact, based on our knowledge of the organizational model of nomad groups (differing languages and ethnicities posed no obstacle to the formation of an alliance, and remnants of formerly different groups could join the same tribe), we cannot rule out the possibility that only one Turkic population speaking several dialects/languages came into contact with Hungarians. There would not have been a barrier to communication, not only for those who spoke mutually understandable Turkic languages, but also for people who spoke varying (or entirely different) languages, as multilingualism may then have been as natural as it is today for the majority of people in the world.

Despite all this, I do not propose that the pre-10th century Turkic borrowings in Hungarian originated from the different languages and dialects of a single Turkic-speaking population. I only wish to demonstrate that even this possibility cannot be excluded, and I wanted to highlight that a linguistic approach based on empirical data cannot unequivocally confirm what would appear to be unquestionable evidence for classical historical linguistics.

Summary

Based on a historical sociolinguistic approach applied, we cannot rule out that the early Turkic borrowings in Hungarian were preserved after a language shift if we consider these borrowings to be remnants after the linguistic assimilation of a politically and culturally dominant Turkic-speaking group. However, this is less likely than that these words come from linguistic borrowing, which would be in line with the vast majority of contact linguistic data. Moving forward, it would be essential to compare the reconstructed structural characteristics of the late Ancient Hungarian and early Old Hungarian languages to those of the proposed source Turkic languages.

Among the researchers who assumed a Turkic-Hungarian language shift, Ármán Vámbéry is the least detached from reality. He recognizes that it is difficult to explain why the Hungarians did not shift language, but unlike Zichy and Halasi-Kun he does not invent an unsupportable historical background to justify his theory. He also seems to be moving in a good direction when he explains that the reasons why the Hungarians did not shift language were the gradual assimilation of Turkic ethnic groups and the numerical superiority of the Hungarian-speaking population throughout the period of contact.

He sees much more accurately than his contemporaries that the formation of a people is a process, and it comes with ethnic mixing regardless of the continuity of language. In general, it is characteristic of him that he projects his ethnographic approach onto his study of language, and as a result he is ahead of his contemporaries in many respects. His etymological suggestions may have often proved erroneous and have been rightly criticized, but his approach to language is more modern and much closer to today's linguistics than to those who did not see the language – nor the community that speaks that language – beyond the words.

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